

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended) A method for an operator of networked gaming machines to remotely ~~configuring~~ configure a bonus game on at least one of the networked gaming machines, at least some of the gaming machines being of a type having a base game display area and a bonus game display area, the method comprising:

receiving, from a location remote from the networked gaming machines, a selection from the operator of the networked gaming machines at least one of a plurality of possible bonus game triggering criteria displayed in a list to thereby define a bonus game triggering criterion related to at least one of a base game and the bonus game, wherein the selected triggering criterion is based at least partially on multiple selected outcomes of the base game and is specific to a particular player playing the base game;

receiving, from the location remote from the networked gaming machines, a selection of at least one of a plurality of possible visual activities displayed in a list for presentation on the bonus game display area of the gaming machine to which the triggering criterion is related;

receiving, from the location remote from the networked gaming machines, a selection of at least one of a plurality of award methods, wherein each of the plurality of award methods defines a method used to determine an item of value to be awarded;

storing the selections on the network; and

operating one of the gaming machines in accordance with the stored selections including:

detecting, via a processor, the selected triggering criterion;

receiving player data that includes at least player demographic data and monitored player activity;

determining, via a processor, one or more of the selected triggering criterion that correspond to the player data;

triggering the operation of a bonus game on a gaming machine being played by a player associated with the player data and to which the determined one or more of the selected triggering criterion corresponds to;

displaying the selected visual activity on the bonus game display area of the gaming machine responsive to determining one or more of the selected triggering criterion; and

awarding the item of value earned based on the selected award method.

2. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, said method further including:

identifying the player of the gaming machine by player interaction with the gaming machine; and

tracking play of the identified player on the base game of the gaming machine and compiling outcomes at the gaming machine for that identified player, said triggering criterion operating to trigger the bonus game according to the bonus game triggering criterion when the compiled outcome matches the triggering criterion.

3. (previously presented) The method of claim 2, wherein identifying the player includes receiving player identification at the gaming machine, transmitting a player identification number through the network to a player database, and retrieving from the player database a player record corresponding to the player identification number.

4. (previously presented) The method of claim 3, further including receiving a player identification card within a reader at the gaming machine to retrieve the player identification number.

5. (previously presented) The method of claim 3, further including manually entering the player identification number at the gaming machine.

6. (original) The method of claim 2, wherein said triggering criterion is based upon a set of game outcomes.

7. (original) The method of claim 2, wherein said triggering criterion is based upon consecutive game outcomes.

8. (original) The method of claim 2, wherein said triggering criterion is based X outcomes in N tries.

9. (original) The method of claim 2, wherein said triggering criterion is based upon a set of game outcomes within a set period of time.

10. (original) The method of claim 2, wherein said triggering criterion is based upon a certain number of points earned by the player.

11. (original) The method of claim 2, wherein said triggering criterion is based upon a number of wins/loses over a set time period.

12. (original) The method of claim 2, wherein said triggering criterion is based upon visitation frequency.

13. (original) The method of claim 2, wherein said triggering criterion is based upon player demographics.

14. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the selected triggering criterion includes a plurality of triggering criteria and wherein the bonus game is triggered responsive to any one of the plurality of triggering criteria.

15. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the selected triggering criterion includes a plurality of triggering criteria and wherein the bonus game is triggered responsive only to all of the plurality of triggering criteria being fulfilled.

16. (currently amended) The method of claim 1, where each of the plurality of gaming machines is associated with one or more gaming machine groups, and at least one of the groups is selected at [[the]] a configuration workstation so that the bonus promotion

defined by the selected triggering criterion and operable on the bonus display area of each of the gaming machines is potentially triggered only on gaming machines within the selected group and not on gaming machines not within the selected group.

17. (canceled)

18. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, the selected visual activity comprising a single animation sequence to be displayed on the gaming machine after which a bonus amount is awarded to the player.

19. (previously presented) The method of claim 18, the selected visual activity designating that the player be required to interact with the gaming machine in order to start or stop the animation sequence.

20. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, the selected visual activity comprising a series of animations to be displayed on the gaming machine after which a bonus amount is awarded to the player.

21. (previously presented) The method of claim 20, the selected visual activity designating that the player be required to interact with the gaming machine between each animation in the series.

22. (previously presented) The method of claim 21, the selected visual activity designating that X number of possible selection areas be displayed to the player and requiring the player to pick N items.

23. (previously presented) The method of claim 21, the selected visual activity designating that X number of possible selection areas be displayed to the player and requiring the player to pick N items or until a stop is chosen which comes earlier.

24. (previously presented) The method of claim 21, the selected visual activity designating that X number of possible selection areas be displayed to the player and requiring the player to pick selection areas to review items associated with respective selection areas until a match occurs.

25. (previously presented) The method of claim 24, the bonus amount associated with the match being decremented as the number of attempts to make a match increases.

26. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, the selected visual activity designating that the player choose to take a first bonus award or risk the first bonus award for a second bonus award.

27. (original) The method of claim 26, the first and second bonus award comprising a plurality of items chosen in a series of selection steps.

28. (previously presented) The method of claim 21, the selected visual activity designating that the player uncovers an image tile by tile in successive bonus rounds until the image is uncovered.

29. (canceled)

30. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the award method designates that a random number be chosen upon a probability table designating the item of value awarded in the bonus promotion.

31. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the award method designates that a random number be chosen based upon a probability table designating the item of value awarded in the bonus promotion wherein the item of value is awarded over a series of sessions that add up to the total value.

32. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, further including a currency criterion designating the item of value awarded to the player.

33. (previously presented) The method of claim 32, wherein the currency criterion is one selected from the group consisting of complementary goods and services, cash back, points, extra credit, promotional credits, and discount coupons.

34. (previously presented) A method for remotely configuring a gaming machine over a network from a configuration computer, the method comprising:

operating a bonus configuration program on a configuration computer remote from the gaming machine, the bonus configuration program including a rule generator comprising a plurality of lists including selectable bonus promotion criteria that are specific to a player playing the gaming machine, including:

a plurality of possible bonus game triggering criteria;

a plurality of possible visual activities for display on the gaming machine when the bonus game is triggered;

a plurality of possible award methods, wherein each of the plurality of award methods defines a method used to determine an item of value to be awarded; and

a plurality of possible items of value awarded to a winner of the bonus game;

allowing one or more of the bonus promotion criteria to be selected by a network operator and causing the one or more selected criteria to be transmitted over the network to the gaming machine;

receiving the one or more selected criteria at the gaming machine and configuring the gaming machine according to the selected criteria, wherein the selected bonus game triggering criteria are based at least partially on at least one selected outcome of a base game played on the gaming machine and selected using the bonus configuration program;

receiving player data that includes at least player demographic data and monitored player activity;

determining which of the one or more selected criteria correspond to the player data; and

triggering the operation of a bonus game on a gaming machine being played by a player associated with the player data and to which the determined one or more selected criteria corresponds to.

35. (previously presented) The method of claim 34, wherein the type of criteria to be selected within the configuration program includes at least one or more of the following types: machine selection, triggers, visual activity, award, and items of value.

36. (previously presented) The method of claim 34, wherein the type of criteria to be selected within the configuration program includes at least two or more of the following types: machine selection, triggers, visual activity, award, and items of value.

37. (previously presented) The method of claim 34, wherein the type of criteria to be selected within the configuration program includes the following types: machine selection, triggers, visual activity, award, and items of value.

38. (original) The method of claim 34, wherein one of the selected criteria includes one or more defined triggering events, the method further including:

allowing play on the gaming machine; and

triggering a bonus game on the gaming machine responsive to play on the gaming machine matching one of the defined triggering events.

39. (original) The method of claim 34, wherein one of the selected criteria includes a plurality of defined triggering events, the method further including:

allowing play on the gaming machine; and

triggering a bonus game on the gaming machine responsive to play on the gaming machine matching the defined triggering events.

40. (previously presented) The method of claim 34, further including:

identifying the player of the gaming machine;

triggering a bonus game on the gaming machine responsive to play by the identified player on the gaming machine according to the defined triggering events.

41. (previously presented) A method for configuring a gaming machine of a type coupled to a network and having a base game and a bonus game, the method comprising:

operating a configuration computer on a network remote from a gaming machine, the configuration computer having a configuration program operating thereon;

selecting, by a network operator at the configuration computer, one or more of a plurality of possible bonus game triggering criteria presented by the configuration program and specific to a particular player playing the base game at the gaming machine, said one or more selected criteria each comprising a bonus game triggering criterion associated with the gaming machine, wherein the selected triggering criterion is based at least partially on multiple pre-selected outcomes of the base game selected at the configuration computer;

selecting at the configuration computer one or more of a plurality of possible visual activities presented by the configuration program;

selecting at the configuration computer one of a plurality of possible award methods presented by the configuration program, wherein each of the plurality of possible award methods defines a method used to determine an item of value to be awarded;

selecting at the configuration computer one or more of a plurality of possible items of value; and

operating the gaming machine by:

detecting the selected triggering criterion;

receiving player data that includes at least player demographic data and monitored player activity;

determining which of the one or more selected criteria correspond to the player data;



triggering the operation of the bonus game on a gaming machine being played by a player associated with the player data and to which the determined one or more selected criteria corresponds to;

displaying the selected visual activity at the gaming machine responsive to detecting the selected triggering criterion; and

awarding one or more of the plurality of possible items of value to the player of the gaming machine based on the selected award method.

42. (previously presented) The method of claim 41, further including the steps of:

transmitting the game triggering criteria over the network to the gaming machine; and

storing the game triggering criteria on the gaming machine and triggering the bonus game when play on the gaming machine matches the bonus rule stored on the machine.

43. (previously presented) A gaming machine coupled to a network and controlled by a processor and a memory in response to a wager, the gaming machine comprising:

a special feature indicated on a visual display, the visual display depicting a bonus event triggered responsive to a bonus rule received over a network and stored in memory, the bonus rule being generated at a configuration station coupled to the network by selecting, by a network operator, at least one of each of:

a plurality of possible bonus game triggering criteria, wherein at least one of the plurality of selected bonus game triggering criteria is based at least partially on multiple selected outcomes of a based game played on the gaming machine and is specific to a particular player playing a base game at the gaming machine;

a plurality of possible special features for indication on the visual display;

a plurality of possible award methods, wherein each of the plurality of possible award methods defines a method used to determine an item of value to be awarded; and

a plurality of possible items of value awarded to a winner of the bonus event based on the selected award method; and

at least one processor programmed to:

receive player data that includes at least player demographic data and monitored player activity;

determine which of the plurality of bonus game triggering criteria correspond to the player data; and

trigger the operation of the bonus game on the gaming machine being played by a player associated with the player data and to which the determined bonus game triggering criteria corresponds to.

44. (original) The gaming machine of claim 43, wherein the visual display is a video display separated from a display of a base game operating on the gaming machine.

45. (currently amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the selected bonus game triggering criterion includes a first bonus game triggering criterion, and the selected visual activity includes a first selected visual activity, the method further comprising:

selecting at [[the]] a configuration workstation a second bonus game triggering criteria from the displayed list to thereby define a second bonus game triggering criterion different from the first bonus game triggering criterion;

selecting at the configuration workstation a second visual activity from the displayed list that is different from the first selected visual activity;

storing the second selections on the network; and

operating one of the gaming machines in accordance with the stored second selections including:

detecting the second triggering criterion;

triggering the operation of a bonus game on a gaming machine to which the detected triggering criterion is related; and

displaying the second selected visual activity on the bonus game display area of the gaming machine responsive to detecting the second selected triggering criterion.

46. (previously presented) An apparatus for an operator of networked gaming machines to remotely configure a bonus game on at least one of the networked gaming machines, at least some of the gaming machines being of a type having a base game display area and a bonus game display area, said apparatus comprising:

a configuration workstation coupled to the gaming machines over the network, including:

a monitor for displaying a list of possible bonus game triggering criteria, a plurality of possible visual activities, and a plurality of award methods;

an input device configured to:

receive, from the operator, a selection of at least one of the plurality of possible bonus game triggering criteria to thereby define a bonus game triggering criterion related to at least one of the games, wherein the selected triggering criterion is based at least partially on multiple selected outcomes of the base game selected at the configuration workstation prior to play of the at least one game and is specific to a player playing a base game at the gaming machine;

receive a selection of at least one of the plurality of possible visual activities for presentation on the bonus game display area of the gaming machine being played by the player to which the triggering criterion is related; and

receive a selection of one of the plurality of award methods, wherein each of the plurality of award methods defines a method used to determine an item of value to be awarded;

memory storage accessible by the network for storing the selections, said configuration workstation configured to:

receive player data that includes at least player demographic data and monitored player activity;

determine which of the at least one of the plurality of possible bonus game triggering criteria corresponds to the player data;

detect the selected triggering criterion;

trigger the operation of a bonus game on a gaming machine being played by a player associated with the player data and to which the determined possible bonus game triggering criteria corresponds to;

display the selected visual activity on the bonus game display area of the gaming machine responsive to detecting the selected triggering criterion; and

award an item of interest at the gaming machine based on the selected award method.

47. (previously presented) The apparatus of claim 46 wherein the apparatus further comprises a player tracking system that identifies the player of the gaming machine on which the bonus game is operated and tracks the player's activity and wherein at least one of the bonus game triggering criteria relates to player's activity compiled over play of multiple games.